

TECHNICAL NOTE

October 14, 1997

SUBJECT: PCMCIA Compatibility with DATATRACE® for Windows (DTW) Software

PROBLEM: The DTW program does not recognize that a Tracer (and PC Interface) are connected to the computer (usually a Laptop) when, in fact, they are.

The system may have worked previously and, now, “for no apparent reason” no longer works. To the program the Serial Port does not appear to exist.

CAUSE: Windows 95 software feels that the Serial Port you have connected the PC Interface to is inactive. It is important to note that if the external COMM port is active and correctly configured, the DATATRACE® for Windows 95 Auto Find option will find the PC Interface and Tracer. **Always!**

While incorrect or corrupted COMM port configurations are not a common occurrence, we have seen it particularly with Laptop computers with certain PCMCIA cards installed. The PCMCIA cards that most frequently have a problem are those like modems that define and configure COMM ports and seems to have more to do with the PCMCIA card protocol than with the computer’s manufacturer.

The problem is that initially the computer is configured properly. When the PCMCIA card is inserted, it automatically defines the COMM port appropriately for its function (usually COMM 1). Unfortunately, it also configures COMM 2 with the same configuration. When you remove the PCMCIA card, COMM 1 reverts to its original setting, but COMM 2 does not. COMM 2 stays defined as COMM 1, and you can not change it through normal means.

CURE: The correct COMM configuration needs to be defined or redefined on this computer.

Frankly, the best suggestion in this situation is to have the computer vendor or your MIS (hardware) correctly configure your computer. We have advised many customers to do this with PCMCIA and other serial configuration problems, and without exception the problems have been resolved painlessly.

PROCEDURE:

You may need a computer technician to ensure that the external COMM port is active and correctly configured.

The procedure is simple: Point to the external port and tell them to make it COMM 2. (It could be either COMM 1 or COMM 2, but COMM 2 is most common for the external port.)

The following is given as a general guideline to help correct configuration problems. However, we strongly advise getting technical assistance.

The first thing to do is determine the COMM Port configuration your computer thinks is current. In Windows 95 you can find that information under several icons displayed in the MY COMPUTER|Control Panel such as System|Device Manager or Modems|Diagnostics. Also check the configuration of the PCMCIA card(s).

You need to make sure that the configuration listed in the computer's BIOS agrees in all respects with that specified by Windows 95.

If, for instance, your computer only recognizes COMM 1, 3, and 4, it strongly suggests that something corrupted your configuration. Most initial computer configurations would not skip COMM 2.

Reestablish the external COMM Port as COMM 2.

If you have a PCMCIA card as described above, you may have to do the following:

- * Do a hard reset to reestablish the original factory default settings of your computer before you try to use the DATATRACE program. This will clear the settings that the PCMCIA card installed.

This can be as easy as turning the computer off (most desktop units) or invoke a special set of keystrokes (most Laptops). Check your computer's manual or with the vendor for specific instructions.

- * Do not insert the PCMCIA card into the computer again until you are done with DATATRACE, otherwise it will take over the COMM port again.
- * You will have to do this hard reset every time you use the PCMCIA card to remove the corrupted settings.

CAUTIONS/NOTES:

Depending on how comfortable you are with computer configurations, you may want to have a computer technician help you. Some computers are more difficult to work with than others. In addition, even many technicians are not very knowledgeable regarding these facets of PCMCIA cards and how they interact with COMM ports. This is because fewer and fewer devices plug into the external COMM port, so frequently people don't recognize that a problem exists.

While this Technical Note describes the situation with DATATRACE® for Windows and Windows 95, the same situation with PCMCIA cards can occur in Windows 3.xx. The solution is essentially the same as described above.